



NEW MEXICO HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
P.O. Box 2348
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-2348

Bill Richardson
Governor

Pamela S. Hyde, J.D.
Secretary

Contact: *Betina Gonzales McCracken* (505) 827-6245 or (505) 699-4675

For Immediate Release

Governor Bill Richardson's *Insure New Mexico!* Legislation on the Move During this Legislative "Year of the Child"

Initiatives focus on increasing access to health coverage for New Mexicans with an emphasis on insuring all children zero to five

Santa Fe, January 20, 2006 – Governor Bill Richardson's goal to decrease the number of uninsured and move toward making New Mexico a state where every child ages zero to five has health care coverage has begun this legislative session. Three pieces of legislation and four budget items are on the move through the legislature, all recommendations from the *Insure New Mexico!* Council.

The three Governor's recommendations that require legislation have been introduced in the legislature. They are:

- **House Bill 24 - Expand Health Insurance Alliance Coverage**, sponsored by Representative Peter Wirth, with a duplicate senate bill expected, sponsored by Sen. Sue Wilson Beffort. "This legislation gives employers more options in covering their employees," said Rep. Wirth. "It expands the Health Insurance Alliance coverage, which will allow them the opportunity to offer employers affordable health insurance through publicly offered programs, such as the State Coverage Insurance Program."
- **Senate Bill 280 – Health Coverage for All New Mexicans Committee**, sponsored by Sen. Dede Feldman, with a duplicate house bill expected, sponsored by Rep. Danice Picraux. "The 'Health Coverage for All New Mexicans Committee' is designed to analyze and determine the cost of **various** models to achieving health insurance coverage for all New Mexicans," said Sen. Feldman. "This proposal is a recommendation of the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee," said Rep. Picraux, chair of the LHHS Committee.
- **House Bill 118 and duplicate Senate Bill 267– Medical and Premium Assistance Program**, sponsored by Rep. Ken Martinez and Sen. President Pro Tem Ben Altamirano. "This legislation authorizes the Human Services Department to provide medical and premium assistance for persons who are not Medicaid eligible," said Rep. Martinez. "This is a very important step in insuring all children ages zero to five."

The number of New Mexicans who are uninsured stands at 399,000 or 21.0%, according to the Census Current Population Survey, 2004. Of that figure, approximately 21,000 children under the age of five are uninsured; however approximately 16,000 of those likely qualify for Medicaid, but are not enrolled. Of the remaining, 5,000 are above 235% of the Federal Poverty Level and do not qualify for Medicaid.

Other *Insure New Mexico!* initiatives that do not require legislation, but are in the Executive Budget include:

- Covering new children and adolescents by making it easier for them to qualify for Medicaid.
- Expanding Medicaid prenatal care to women from the current 185% of the Federal Poverty Level to 235%.
- Changing re-certification of Medicaid eligibility from six to 12 months.
- Start-up funding for the Small Employer Insurance Program.

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